San Bernardino’s “Last Chicano” visits the Imperial Valley
By ROMAN FLORES, Staff Writer

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CALEXICO — Tough-guy brawls, arrests, social activism, protests and living in poverty; such are the subjects of “The Last Chicano,” the memoirs of author Manuel Ruben Delgado.

Delgado was on hand to read from and sign copies of his book at the library of San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus as part of its “Explore SDSU-IV Week” sponsored by the Art Without Borders club.

The Wiseman Theater Company also gave a short 15- to 20-minute play about materials related to Delgado’s book to wrap up the night.

Delgado, who was born and raised in the barrio of Mt. Vernon in western San Bernardino, moved on from being a high school dropout at age 16 to eventually earn a master’s degree in education from San Diego State University. His book recounts his tale of the hard life in the barrio through his college years as a student activist at University of California, Berkeley, where he helped form a coalition which eventually became the center of national media attention from January to May 1969 due to the violence that resorted from the community backlash against the student protests.

“My book is a memoir that encompasses experiences that were important for Chicanos and Mexicans (of my generation),” Delgado said.

“You cannot imagine how things were then when compared to today. We were fighting for fundamental changes. We thought we could change the world,” Delgado said.

Delgado lived in Calexico from 1990-1998, where he made friends and grew to like the area.

“It’s very insulated. The whole town is Mexican so you don’t experience the same conflicts you would as in a big city,” Delgado said.

“My time here was very peaceful. (Calexico) seems like a peaceful family town. It’s a good place to raise kids,” Delgado said.

Delgado has done three book signings prior to Calexico and he hopes to do more in the future. He also has three books in progress including “Berdoo: The People’s History of San Bernardino,” “Baja a La Brava,” a collection of tales about his adventures spent experiencing Baja California, and “Don Juan de Deseo,” which highlights the absurdity of the constant search for desire.

More information about Delgado and his
book “The Last Chicano: A Mexican American Experience” can be found on his Web site manuelrdelgado.com

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